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ABSTRACT

A profile of Israel is sketched in this paper. Emphasis is placed on the nature, scope, and accomplishments of population activities in the country. Topics and sub-topics include: location and description of the country; population--size, growth patterns, immigration patterns, differentials in growth, age structure, rural/urban distribution, economic status, literacy, future trends; population growth and socioeconomic development--national income, labor force, immigration and defense; history of population concerns; population policies; and population/family planning programs. Summary statements indicate that because Israel is a country of immigrants, there are substantial gaps in socioeconomic status and in standards of living. This is due in part to three factors: origin, duration of stay in Israel, and educational achievement. Thus, economic difficulties have curtailed development of family planning services. A map of the country is drawn and statistical data, tables and charts are given. (BL)

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# Country Profiles

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# ISRAEL

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*The authors have used extensively data collected and published by the Central Bureau of Statistics in preparing this* Profile. *They take full responsibility for any errors or misuse of these data.*

Israel is a relatively new country, small, yet heterogeneous and complex. Since its establishment in 1948, the country has never had a year of total peace. Israel has experienced not only the highest rate of immigration that has ever been recorded, but these immigrants were probably the most heterogeneous, ethnically, socially, demographically, and economically, in the history of immigration. Despite substantial efforts devoted to security problems and to the social and economic absorption of a large number of immigrants, Israel has experienced an exceptionally rapid growth in the amounts of her economic investments, national product, and expenditures, both total and per capita. Moreover, subpopulations immigrating to Israel with high levels of fertility and mortality have undergone in the span of two decades extremely rapid transitions in both vital processes. Emerging from rapid social and cultural changes are present indications of social unrest and conflict. The social, economic, and demographic heterogeneity on the one hand, and the frequently rising tensions resulting from political and military strains on the other, have given rise to a mixture of strong feelings and attitudes. Social justice and a strong national identity are perhaps the most important concerns in this rapidly changing society.

## Location and Description

Israel is a republic located in southwest Asia, on the eastern wing of the Mediterranean. Its total area is 20,770 square kilometers, according to the 4 June 1967 borders but including the whole of Jerusalem. The country is bounded on the north by Lebanon, on the east by Syria and Jordan, on the southwest by the United Arab Republic, and on the west by the Mediterranean Sea and Gaza. The southernmost boundary opens onto the Gulf of Aqaba.

A coastal plain runs along the Mediterranean. Narrow in the north, it widens further south in Sharon and the Shefela to a width of 31 kilometers. To the northeast are the Galilean hills, which reach an altitude of about 1,208 meters and overlook the upper Jordan valley to the east. On the northern border at Dan, the Jordan valley is 150 meters above sea level but at Lake Tiberias it is 212 meters below sea level. Further south is the Dead Sea, the lowest point on earth, at 310 meters below sea level. The arid Negev desert occupies the southern triangle of Israel.

North of Beersheba, Israel's climate is Mediterranean. A mild rainy season lasts from October to April; summers are hot and dry. Along the coast mean temperatures vary in winter between 15 and 18 degrees centigrade, and in summer between 29 and 35 degrees. In the Negev desert and Jordan valley mean temperatures at midday exceed 38 degrees.

Centuries of overcultivation and overgrazing have depleted the natural vegetation of the region. The hills, coastal sand dunes, and Negev are mostly covered with scrub. Much of the country north of Beersheba, however, is under intensive cultivation or reforestation, and efforts are under way to make the Negev arable. Major crops are citrus fruits, grapes, potatoes, dairy products, and grains. Agriculture accounts for only about 13 percent of the gross national product.

More than 50 percent of Israel's gross national product derives from manufacturing and industry (food processing, metals and machinery, textiles, chemicals, and petroleum products). Trade and commerce are the next most important economic sector, accounting for 20 percent of the gross national product.

During ancient times the area consisting of the present Israeli and Jordanian territories changed boundaries frequently. A succession of rulers from 1400 B.C. to the sixteenth century included the Canaanites, Hebrews, Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Hellenes, Maccabees, Romans, Moslems, Mamelukes, and Ottoman Turks. Ottoman rule, which began in 1516, lasted for some 400 years; and during the latter part of that reign modern Jewish resettlement began (in

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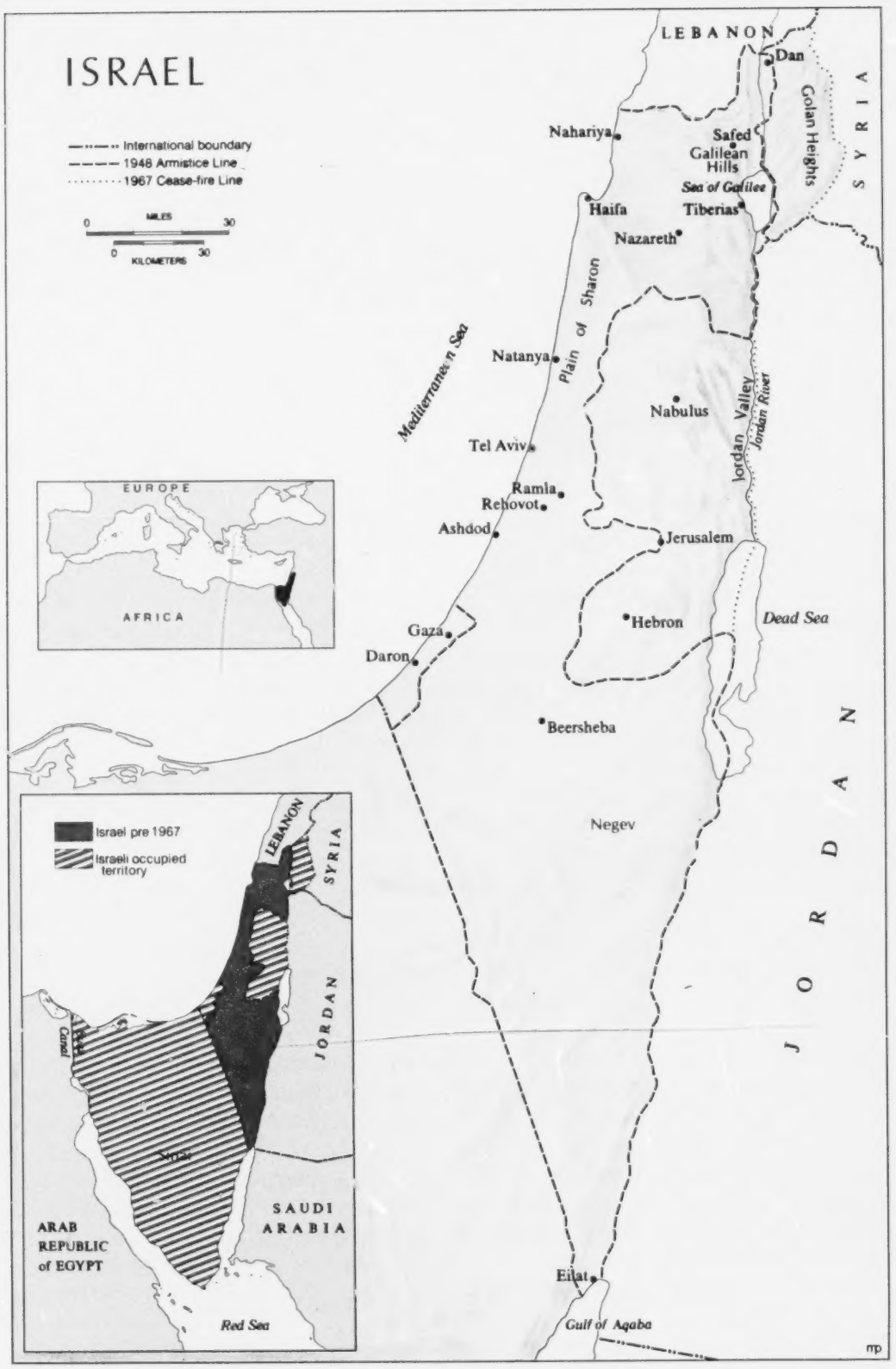



1870). In 1920 the British, who had conquered the area during World War I, acquired Palestine and Trans-Jordan (now the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan) as mandates of the League of Nations. British rule lasted for nearly 30 years until 1948, when the new Jewish state of Israel was founded.

Israel is ruled by the Knesset (parliament), a unicameral legislative body of 120 members elected by universal adult suffrage. Israel has a parliamentary democracy. At the local level, elected councils govern the country's 29 municipalities.

The cabinet, headed by the prime minister, is collectively responsible to the Knesset. It takes office on receiving a vote of confidence from that body and continues in office until it resigns, the prime minister resigns, or it receives a vote of nonconfidence, at which time a new cabinet is formed. Ministers are usually members of the Knesset, but nonmembers may be appointed. As no party has so far commanded an absolute majority of the Knesset, all cabinets have been based on coalitions in which the largest party has been the Labor Party.

## Population

### Size

*Total population.* At the end of 1970 the population numbered 3 million, of whom 2.56 million or 82.7 percent were Jews and 440,000 were non-Jews (mostly Arabs). The Jewish population is made up predominantly of immigrants, who arrived during the present century, and their Israel-born descendants. In 1970, 28 percent of the Jewish population was of European origin, 26 percent of Afro-Asian origin, and 46 percent Israel-born. The non-Jewish population is divided into three main religious groups—Moslems (74 percent), Christians (18 percent), and Druze (8 percent). (See Table 1 for selected demographic data.)

*Number and size of households.* There are approximately 750,000 households in Israel. The average number of persons in a Jewish household (excluding one-person households) is about four. Among the non-Jewish population, average household size is over six persons. These differentials in household size reflect differential fertilities of the two groups.

The average number of children born to a Jewish family is nearly 3.5, but the population is rather heterogeneous in this respect. Whereas families of Afro-Asian origin have 4.5 children on the average, those of European origin have just over 2.5. The average number of children born to a non-Jewish family is about 7.7; but the number varies according to religion, rural or urban residence, occupation, education, and other socioeconomic characteristics. For instance, the number of children born to Moslem, Druze, and Christian women is about 9, 8 and 4, respectively.

*Age at marriage.* Marriage is almost universal among Jews in Israel; only 2 percent of men and 2.5 percent of women aged 50 or over have never married. In 1970, the average age at first marriage was slightly over 25 years for Jewish men and nearly 22 for Jewish women. These averages

have been declining over time for both sexes. Most non-Jews also marry. Among non-Jews, average age at first marriage was 25 years for men and 21 for women in 1970, and it has been increasing slightly over time.

*Women of reproductive age.* The total number of women in the reproductive ages (15–49), by population group, was as follows at the end of 1970:

| *Population group* | *Number (thousands)* |
|---|---|
| Jews, by origin | |
| Israel | 224.6 |
| Europe or America | 165.7 |
| Africa | 126.2 |
| Asia | 107.1 |
| All Jews | 623.6 |
| Non-Jews, by religion | |
| Muslim | 61.9 |
| Christian | 18.5 |
| Other | 6.9 |
| All non-Jews | 87.3 |

TABLE 1. *A Selection of Demographic Data*

| Characteristic | Israel | Jewish population | Non-Jewish population |
|---|---|---|---|
| Population size (thousands) | 3,001 | 2,561 | 440 |
| Average household size | 3.8 | 3.6 | 5.9 |
| Average household size (excluding one-person households) | 4.2 | 4.0 | 6.2 |
| Percentage urban | 83.0 | 89.3 | 43.2 |
| Mean age at marriage: | | | |
| men | 25.0[a] | 25.0 | 25.2 |
| women | 21.6[a] | 21.8 | 20.4 |
| Birth rate (per 1,000 per year) | 27.3 | 24.2 | 45.6 |
| Death rate (per 1,000 per year) | 7.0 | 7.2 | 6.6 |
| Natural increase (per 1,000) | 20.1 | 16.9 | 39.0 |
| Infant mortality (per 1,000 births) | 24.4 | 18.9 | 41.8 |
| Total fertility rate | 4.0[a] | 3.4 | 7.7 |
| Expectation of life at birth: | | | |
| Males | u | 69.8 | 68.8 |
| Females | u | 73.3 | 72.3 |
| Average age | 28.7[a] | 30.0 | 21.2 |
| Percentage in age group 0–14 | 33.2[a] | 30.4 | 49.9 |
| Percentage employed in agriculture | 9.7[a] | 7.4 | 23.3 |
| Percentage illiterate among adults | 13.2[a] | 9.3 | 36.3 |
| Percentage with completed academic education | 11.4[a] | 13.0 | 2.1 |

u = unavailable. Used either when no data were available or when the available data were considered particularly deficient.
[a] Computed values based on official statistics.

## GROWTH PATTERNS

Birth rates during 1970 were 24.2 per thousand of population among Jews and 45.5 among non-Jews. It should be noted that the Jewish birth rate has been declining since the early 1950s as a consequence of both a considerable fertility decline among couples of Afro-Asian origin (a process that is still in progress) and changes in the age structure of the population. No clear, definite patterns of a significant decline in birthrates among non-Jews as a group can be measured as yet, although there are some indications of a decline among selected groups. (See Table 2 for vital rates, 1945–1970.)

Expectation of life was about 71 years among Jews in 1970 (68 years in 1950) and about 70 years among Arabs (about 50 years in 1950) for both sexes. Infant mortality among non-Jews, however, is still twice as high as among Jews. Crude death rates are higher among Jews—7.3 per thousand compared with 6.6 among non-Jews in 1970. This is in part a reflection of the very young age structure of the non-Jewish population in Israel.

It follows from the differential demographic patterns that have been described above that current natural increase is very dissimilar among the Jewish and non-Jewish communities in Israel. Among Jews it was about 17 per thousand in 1970; and the prospects for the future are for further declines, as the Afro-Asian section of the Jewish population proceeds in its transition toward low fertility and small family size. Natural increase among non-Jews was about 40 per thousand during 1970. This increase results from a combination of the continued high fertility and large family size on the one hand, and a very substantial increase in life expectancy on the other. Consequently, natural growth among non-Jews is currently about 2.5 times as high as among Jews. The possibility that such differential patterns will continue might, in the absence of considerable Jewish immigration, have social and political implications and is a potential source of strain and tension.

## IMMIGRATION PATTERNS

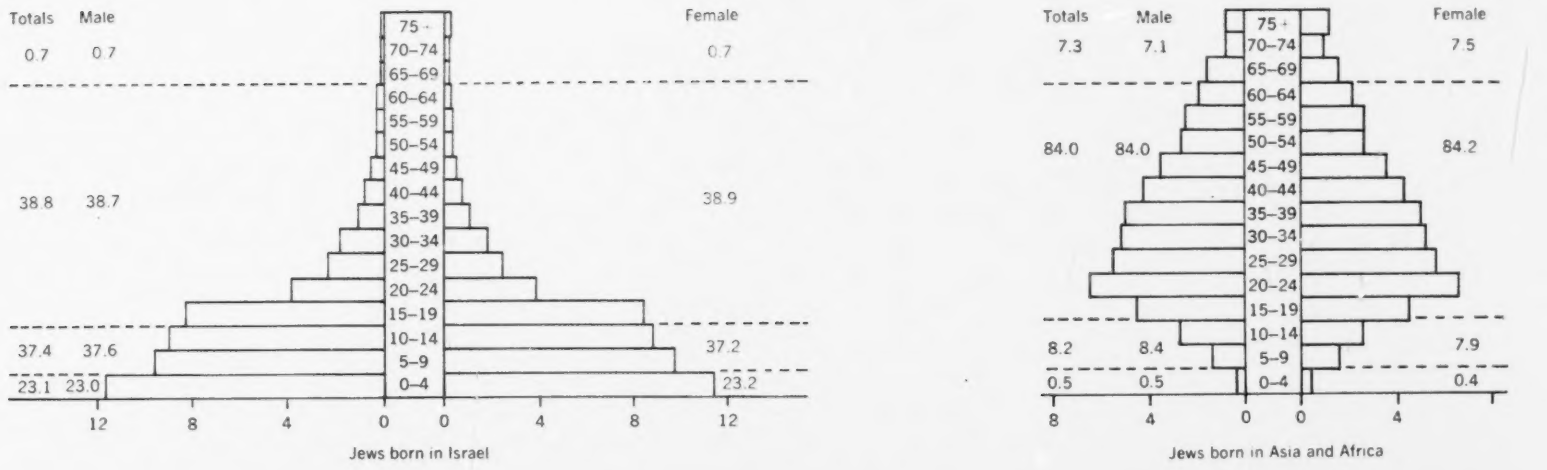
The most important source of growth of the Jewish population since the modern resettlement of Israel has been immigration. The average rate of immigration was of the order of 8 percent per annum before the foundation of the state and about 5 percent per annum thereafter, up to 1967. The intensity of immigration has varied over the years. During 1948–1949, the rate

TABLE 2. *Vital rates for Jews and Non-Jews: 1945–1970*

| Year | Marriages | Divorces | Live births | Deaths | Natural increase | Infant deaths[a] |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Jews (per 1,000 population) | | | |
| 1945 | 9.3 | 2.5 | 30.3 | 6.6 | 23.6 | 35.8 |
| 1951 | 11.8 | 1.8 | 32.7 | 6.4 | 26.3 | 39.2 |
| 1955 | 8.7 | 1.3 | 27.2 | 5.8 | 21.5 | 32.4 |
| 1960 | 7.7 | 1.1 | 23.9 | 5.5 | 18.4 | 27.2 |
| 1965 | 8.0 | 1.0 | 22.6 | 6.4 | 16.2 | 22.7 |
| 1970 | 9.5 | 0.9 | 24.2 | 7.3 | 16.9 | 18.9 |
| | | | Non-Jews (per 1,000 population) | | | |
| 1945[b] | 9.1 | 1.7 | 54.2 | 16.3 | 37.9 | 121.0[c] |
| 1951 | 8.3 | 0.9 | 46.5 | 8.8 | 37.5 | 48.8 |
| 1955 | 6.7 | 0.6 | 46.0 | 8.6 | 37.4 | 62.5 |
| 1960 | 8.8 | 0.5 | 50.3 | 7.5 | 42.8 | 48.0 |
| 1965 | 7.5 | 0.4 | 50.7 | 6.1 | 44.6 | 43.4 |
| 1970[d] | 7.2 | 0.5 | 45.6 | 6.6 | 39.0 | 41.8 |

[a] Figures are per 1,000 live births.
[b] Muslims only.
[c] 1942–1944.
[d] Includes East Jerusalem.

FIGURE 1. *Age-Sex Distribution of Populations of Israel*




of immigration exceeded 20 percent per annum, but it was rather less than 1 percent per annum during 1966–1968. Immigration to Israel has varied over time not only in its intensity, but also in its ethnic composition. Whereas up to 1950 the majority of immigrants came from European countries, between 1951 and 1957 and also in the period 1960–1968 most immigrants were of Afro-Asian origin. Generally speaking, it can be said that there was a shift in the origin of immigration over time from Western countries to Eastern countries. Thus, immigration to Israel contributed considerably toward the rapid change, both in size and in socioeconomic and demographic characteristics, of the Jewish population.

### Differentials in Growth

During 1948–1951, the Jewish population was growing at an annual rate of 24 percent. Immigration was responsible for nearly nine-tenths of the increase. Between 1952 and 1964, the growth rate of the Jewish population was 3.5 percent, of which about half was accounted for by immigration. Since 1964 the growth rate has been declining. In contrast, the growth rate of the non-Jewish population has always been predominantly affected by its high natural increase and has remained at nearly 4 percent per annum throughout the whole period.

Thus, both the Jewish and the non-Jewish communities in Israel have experienced substantial population growth. But whereas the growth of the Jewish sector has depended mainly upon immigration, the growth of the non-Jewish sector of the population has been a result of a high natural increase. Because the volume of Jewish immigration has tended to decline over time, the non-Jewish population has in fact been increasing more rapidly than the Jewish population since the late 1950s.

### Age Structure

The differentials in demographic patterns between the Jewish and the non-Jewish sectors of the population of Israel are reflected, among other things, in the age structure of these two communities. The age structure of the Jewish population is younger than that of Western European populations, but much older than that of the non-Jewish population in Israel. The percentages in the 0–14, 15–64, and 65 and over age groups in 1970 among Jews were 30 percent, 63 percent, and 7 percent, respectively; among non-Jews they were 50 percent, 46 percent, and 4 percent. (See Figure 1.) One major implication of the very young age distribution of the non-Jewish sector of the population is that even if fertility declines considerably in the coming years, high birth rates, and therefore high population growth, will follow for many years. Since it can safely be predicted that fertility levels of the Afro-Asian section of the Jewish population in Israel will continue to decline, future growth of the Jewish population will depend upon the volume of immigration even more strongly than in the past. Projections of the Jewish and the non-Jewish populations have shown that the fraction of non-Jews is almost bound to increase by 3 to 4 percent within the next 30 years, and this is one of the population issues that cause some concern among Jews in Israel.

### Rural–Urban Distribution

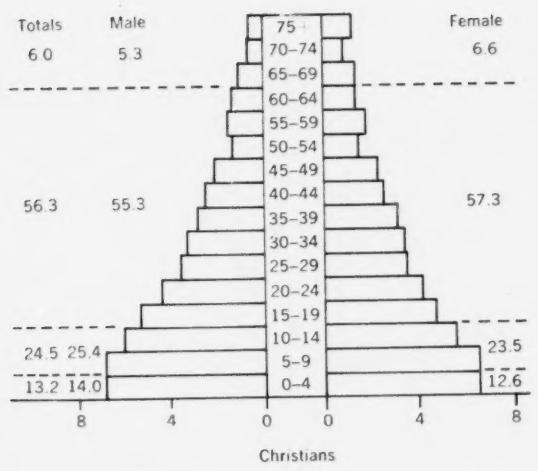
Israel's population is predominantly urban; that is, over 83 percent reside in towns and cities, and only 17 percent reside in rural settlements. These percentages are rather dissimilar for the Jewish and non-Jewish communities: 90 percent of the Jewish population is urban, and only 43 percent of the non-Jewish population is urban. (See Table 3.)

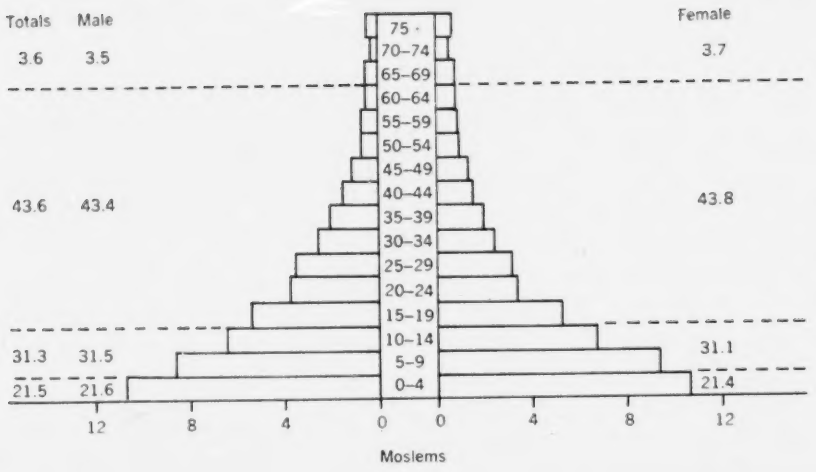
### Economic Status

Differences in economic status of Jews and non-Jews are reflected in the

TABLE 3. *Population of the Ten Major Cities: End of 1970*

| City | Total population (thousands) | Non-Jews (thousands) |
|---|---|---|
| Tel Aviv | 384.0 | 7.2 |
| Jerusalem | 291.7 | 76.2 |
| Haifa | 217.1 | 13.2 |
| Ramat Gan | 115.5 | 0.0 |
| Holon | 88.5 | 0.0 |
| Bath Yam | 83.5 | 0.0 |
| Petah Tikva | 83.2 | 0.0 |
| Beer Sheba | 77.4 | 0.0 |
| Bnei Berak | 72.1 | 0.0 |
| Netania | 65.4 | 0.0 |




patterns of economic activity of the two communities, as shown in the following table:

| *Economic activity* | *Jews (percent)* | *Non-Jews (percent)* |
|---|---|---|
| Agriculture | 7 | 23 |
| Industry and mining | 25 | 17 |
| Construction | 7 | 20 |
| Other | 61 | 40 |
| All industries | 100 | 100 |

It is noticeable that the Arab community is engaged, to a much larger extent than the Jewish, in agriculture and construction; the Jewish sector, on the other hand, is more concentrated in the industrial and service branches. The national income in Israel in 1969 was US$1,289 per capita. Average annual income from wages and salaries earned by urban male employees that year was as follows for Jews and non-Jews:

| *Urban male employees* | *Income (Israeli pounds[a])* |
|---|---|
| Jews, by origin | |
| Europe or America | 9,300 |
| Israel | 7,500 |
| Africa or Asia | 6,400 |
| All Jews | 7,800 |
| Non-Jews | 4,800 |

[a] One Israeli pound = US$0.24 in 1971.

LITERACY

Israel's compulsory educational system covered eight years of tuition-free schooling up to 1969, but in that year it was increased to nine years. Nevertheless, among Jews 53 percent of the adult population (aged 14 or over) had attained at least nine years of schooling, according to data relating to 1970; and, in 1970, only 9 percent of the Jewish adult population, consisting mainly of older immigrants of Oriental origin, were still illiterate. A large portion of non-Jews, too, were over school age when education became compulsory. Among the non-Jewish adult population, only 15 percent had had at least nine years of schooling, whereas some 36 percent were still illiterate. (In 1961 these percentages were 9 and 50, respectively.) The percentages attaining at least nine years of schooling can be expected to increase, of course, in the coming years in both communities, as more of the younger generations reach adulthood.

FUTURE TRENDS

Table 4 presents two population projections for Israel in the year 1985, by alternative assumptions concerning Jewish immigration.

## Population Growth and Socioeconomic Development

NATIONAL INCOME

In Israel since 1955 national income has quadrupled in real terms (constant prices), but, as noted earlier, population has been growing substantially too. Nevertheless, even allowing for population growth, national income per capita has more than doubled between 1955 and 1970. This increase can be seen in the different economic sectors on the one hand and in expenditures, private as well as public, on the other. For instance, in the early 1950s Israel had to rely heavily on importation for her agricultural supplies. Not only has the total value of the net product in agriculture increased considerably (in real terms), but the per capita product has quadrupled since the 1950s. The rate of growth slowed down during the

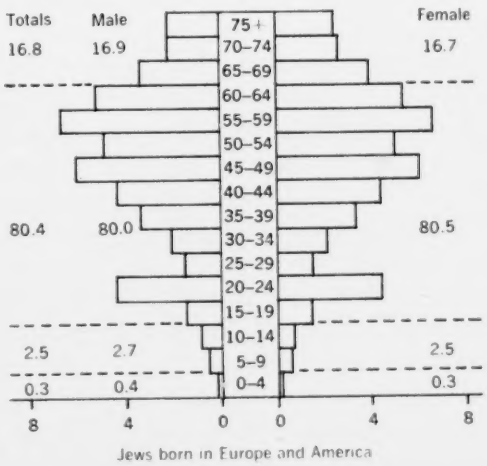



TABLE 4. *Population of Israel in 1985 (two assumptions)*

| Population group | End of 1965 (thousands) | In 1985 (thousands) Assuming 15,000 Jewish immigrants per year | In 1985 (thousands) Assuming 25,000 Jewish immigrants per year |
|---|---|---|---|
| Jews | 2,299.1 | 3,263.7 | 3,467.0 |
| Non Jews | 299.3 | 655.5 | 655.5 |
| Both | 2,598.4 | 3,919.2 | 4,122.5 |
| Percent of non-Jews | 11.5 | 16.7 | 15.9 |

1960s, however, when the supply of many items exceeded local demand. Israel is currently an exporter of agricultural products, which are not limited to traditional exports such as citrus. This development was a result of heavy investments in agriculture during the 1950s. Agricultural investments declined in time, however, in proportion to total investments. It should also be noted that although the total agricultural product has increased substantially, the labor force actually engaged in agriculture has declined both as a fraction of the total labor force and also in absolute terms. This was possible through the increasing application of modern technology to the agricultural sector.

National income from industry has also been increasing in real terms and in per capita. Whereas the growth rate of agricultural production has slowed down in recent years, that of manufacturing continued its fast growth. Consequently, the relative contribution of agriculture to the national income declined while that of manufacturing tended to increase during the 1960s. Industrial branches notable for their recent rapid growth are electrical and electronic equipment, metal and plastic products, and to some extent textiles.

Public expenditures on education and on public health have increased considerably since the 1950s, in total and per capita values. In fact, expenditures on education have increased fourfold, reflecting both the achievement of universal elementary education and an extension of the educational system to higher levels (Table 5).

Expenditures on public health per capita have more than doubled since the 1950s. In 1948 there were 66 hospitals, seven of which were government-operated; in 1966 there were 158 hospitals, 34 of them government-operated. (A large number of hospitals not operated by the government are, however, public, nonprofit hospitals. Private hospitals constitute a small minority of the total.)

TABLE 5. *Jewish and Arab Educational Institutions by Type and Number: 1948–1949 and 1970–1971*

| Type of Institution | Jewish | | Arab | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1948–1949 | 1970–1971 | 1948–1949 | 1970–1971 |
| Kindergarten | 709 | 3,343 | 10 | 225 |
| Primary school | 467 | 1,219 | 45 | 277 |
| Post-primary school | 98 | 523 | 1 | 66 |
| Teacher-training college | 12 | 38 | 0 | 1 |
| Intermediate school | — | 62 | — | 29 |
| School for handicapped children | 57[a] | 161 | 0 | 5 |
| School for working youth | 207[a] | 116 | 0 | 7 |

[a] 1951–1952 figure.

## Labor Force

An important element of the economy, closely related to population growth and its characteristics, is the labor force. Its size in Israel has naturally increased with population growth, but not so rapidly (Table 6). The decline in the general rate of participation of the population in the labor force has been the result of two factors. The extension and growth of the educational system has meant that increasing numbers of young persons receive full-time education; it has also brought about an increase in the age of entry into the labor force. In addition, there is a process of aging in the population of Israel, which means that even with constant rates of age-specific participation, the general percentage of the population participating in the labor force is bound to decline. Future trends are very difficult, if not impossible, to predict with accuracy. They depend to a great extent on the volume and origin of future immigration.

## Immigration and Defense

Israel's major economic difficulties since independence originated from the huge investments that were required to finance its tremendous population growth (mainly from immigration) and its heavy defense expenditures. These investments have been a heavy burden on the economy and could not possibly be met wholly from Israel's internal resources. Moreover, since a substantial portion of the immigrants were of relatively low socioeconomic status, these investments were of a long-term nature (in particular, investments in education and social welfare).

These huge investments in immigration and defense had to be financed partly through capital importation of various kinds. Because immigration to Israel has never ceased (although its volume has diminished in recent years) and because defense expenditures have increased, these investments continue to be a heavy burden on the economy. At the same time, the importation of capital to finance these investments, which has always been limited, is becoming increasingly difficult.

TABLE 6. *Male Population Aged 14 and over, by Labor-Force Characteristics: 1955–1970*
(Numbers are in thousands)

| Males aged 14 and over | 1955 | | 1960 | | 1965 | | 1970 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| All males | 594.4 | 100.0 | 700.2 | 100.0 | 866.6 | 100.0 | 1,016.9 | 100.0 |
| In labor force | 476.3 | 80.1 | 546.7 | 78.1 | 659.4 | 76.1 | 703.6 | 69.2 |
| Not in labor force | 118.1 | 19.9 | 153.5 | 21.9 | 207.2 | 23.9 | 313.3 | 30.8 |
| All males in labor force | 476.3 | 100.0 | 546.7 | 100.0 | 659.4 | 100.0 | 703.6 | 100.0 |
| Employed | 443.0 | 93.0 | 521.9 | 95.5 | 637.3 | 96.7 | 659.8 | 96.6 |
| Unemployed | 33.3 | 7.0 | 24.8 | 4.5 | 22.1 | 3.3 | 23.8 | 3.4 |

## History of Population Concerns

The focus of population concern in Israel and, before the foundation of the state, in Palestine, has always been political. During and even before the British rule of Palestine, the Jewish community and its internal authorities aimed at increasing the size of the Jewish population, in absolute and relative terms, as rapidly as possible. This was considered an important issue in the determination of the political future of the country. Therefore, as a matter of policy, the Jewish community invested a great deal of effort in maximizing the volume of Jewish immigration. As shown in the foregoing discussion, these immigration policies have been very effective in the sense that the Jewish population experienced tremendous growth. Nevertheless, until the establishment of the state of Israel, Jewish immigration was controlled by the British government, which severely restricted its volume. Only very limited migration was permitted into the country during World War II, for example, and the restrictions were only slightly relaxed after the war. Conflicting political ambitions of the two communities in the country, restrictions imposed on Jewish immigration by the British, and news of the fate of European Jewry were three important elements in the concern of the Jewish community over the low and declining birth rates before the foundation of the state of Israel. Unlike immigration activities, however, the pronatal concern during that period did not bring about any significant consequences.

## Population Policies

The political-demographic situation changed entirely with Israel's independence, in the sense that the volume of immigration was now controlled by the Israeli government. The volume of immigration depended now on the capacity of Israel to absorb more immigrants and on the willingness and ability of Jewish people in other countries to immigrate to Israel. Indeed, one of the first laws passed by the Knesset was the Law of Return. According to this law, every Jewish person, irrespective of origin, was entitled to immigrate to Israel and to settle there with the aid and assistance of the state. As mentioned earlier, Israel's immigration policies enabled and encouraged hundreds of thousands of Jewish people from many countries to immigrate to Israel during the period 1948–1951.

### Population Committee

The volume of immigration started to decline after 1952, both because of Israel's economic difficulties and because the number of potential immigrants in the diaspora had declined. At that time pressures for action toward the establishment of a pronatal policy in Israel were intensified. These pressures came from various sources; but the right-wing political parties and, even more so, the religious parties (which always had considerable political power in Israel's government and administrative machinery) were the main sources. Consequently, Israel's former Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion, who had been actively interested in Israel's population problems for many years, appointed a Population Committee on 1 April 1962.

The committee was asked to enquire into and to advise the government on matters concerning natality policies, and also to consider the means by which large and deprived families could be assisted. On the one hand, there was the concern over differential fertility between the Jewish and the Arab populations and, on the other, there was the problem of the economically deprived families in Israel whose number increased as a result of the immigration waves of the 1950s. This second problem was not entirely of a socioeconomic nature. Significantly, a substantial portion of these families were immigrants of Afro-Asian origin.

The Population Committee submitted its report to Prime Minister Levi Eshkol in April 1966. It contained several recommendations. One was that a special body within the governmental framework be established to deal with the problem of low Jewish natality and to promote the welfare of large families. For example, it suggested that working conditions for married women be arranged to permit them to have larger families and that loans be made available to "growing" families to finance larger apartments. Other recommendations were that the importance of larger families as an urgent national need be given publicity through the news media and educational campaigns; that large families be made eligible for more financial assistance through social-welfare measures than they presently received; and that induced abortion (which was thought to be quite prevalent) be tightly controlled. Concerning abortion, it was suggested (although the committee was sharply divided on this) that the performance of induced abortions should not be permitted except in authorized public hospitals under strict control by committees appointed to consider each case. The committees would have appropriate facilities and funds at their disposal to assist women whose request for an abortion was rejected. Performance of an abortion in any place other than an authorized public hospital would be subject to penalty.

In fact, induced abortion is unlawful in Israel except for the purpose of "preserving the woman's health." Although that law was in effect when the committee issued its recommendations, in practice since 1952 it has not been rigidly enforced and violators are prosecuted only in special circumstances—for example, if an abortion results in the death of the woman. Because induced abortion is illegal, however, there are no official statistics about its frequency. According to one estimate (Bachi 1970), 47 percent of Jewish women aged 40 and over have had at least one induced abortion; the percentage is 25, 30, and 52 among Jewish women of Afro-Asian, Israeli, and European origin, respectively.

## Population Programs

Israel has no pronatal policy as yet. In line with the first recommendation of the committee, however, the government decided at its meeting of 9 April 1967 to establish a Demographic Center to act as an administrative unit at the prime minister's office. Apparently, it was the government's intention that the center would initiate other actions recommended by the Population Committee. This decision contained a statement that the aim of the center would be "to act systematically in carrying out a population policy intended to

increase fertility by creating a more favorable pronatal atmosphere." The statement added that an increase in Israel's natality was "crucial for the whole future of the Jewish people."

The center was to operate through a public committee, an executive council, and an administrative staff. The public committee, consisting of about 100 members drawn from various governmental departments and public organizations, was appointed by the government. From its members the government also appointed the executive council and its chairman, who was also to be chairman of the public committee and head of the center. The public committee was to meet several times a year for the purpose of obtaining information, exchanging views, and proposing general policies for the center. The executive council was to meet more frequently and direct the center's work.

Activities of the center to date have been in three areas: research, publicity, and experimentation. Research has been initiated on Israeli attitudes toward having a third and fourth child. The center has promoted large families through various public channels such as radio and television. It has also initiated a small-scale program through which couples intending to have another child may, under certain conditions, apply for a low-interest loan for the purpose of acquiring a larger apartment.

One program under consideration by the center is the establishment of day-care centers. To date, however, nothing of significance has been done to implement such a program, nor does it seem likely that any large-scale action will be attempted in the foreseeable future because of Israel's current economic difficulties.

### Family Planning

There are no public family planning services in Israel, but a variety of contraceptives are available through private channels. Although family planning advice can be obtained from gynecologists, private consultations are fairly costly. This is probably one reason why the use of modern contraceptives in Israel is so limited. A recent sample survey of the Jewish urban population found that only 23 percent of women in the childbearing age groups used the IUD (5 percent) or oral contraceptives (18 percent); 57 percent of women of reproductive age, according to the survey, used no contraception. Extensive use of relatively ineffective contraceptive methods (20 percent of women of childbearing age) may explain the high rate of induced abortion.

## Conclusion

Israel is a country of immigrants. Origin, duration of stay in Israel and educational achievements are perhaps the three most important factors determining one's position on the socioeconomic scale. The range of that scale is wide because there is such a high variability in the population in these three factors. This results in substantial gaps in socioeconomic status and in standards of living. Perhaps Israel's most important task in the future is the closing up of these gaps. The government is actively engaged on this front. However, real progress in this field can probably be expected only when substantial resources can be diverted to this purpose from security purposes; that is, when the present political situation in the Middle East is turned into a lasting peace.

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